THE GIRL I LOVED

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

Illustrated by
HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY

THE GIRL I LOVED

Chandler Christy - 1900

The Girl I Loved

By

James Whitcomb Riley

Drawings by

Howard Chandler Christy

Decorations by Margaret Armstrong

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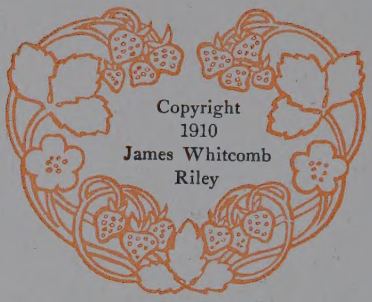
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TO

JOHN J. CURTIS

THE GIRL I LOVED

IT'S a mystery to see me—
A man o' fifty-four,
Who's lived a cross old bachelo'
Fer thirty year' and more—
A-lookin' glad and smilin'!
And they's none o' you can say
That you can guess the reason
Why I feel so good to-day!

None o' you can say
That you can guess the reason
Why I feel so good to-day!

I must tell you all about it!
But I'll have to deviate
A little, in beginnin',
So's to set the matter straight
As to how it comes to happen
That I never took a wife—
Kind o' "crawfish" from the Present
To the Springtime of my life!

I wuz brought up in the country:
Of a family of five—
Three brothers and a sister—
I'm the only one alive,—

I was brought up in the country

Fer they all died little babies;
And 'tuz one o' Mother's ways,
You know, to want a daughter;
So she took a girl to raise.
The sweetest little thing she wuz,
With rosy cheeks, and fat—
We wuz little chunks o' shavers then
About as high as that!—

Howard Chandler Christy' 1910-

We wuz little chunks o' shavers then
About as high as that!

But someway we sort o' *suited*-like!
And Mother she'd declare
She never laid her eyes on
A more lovin' pair
Than *we* wuz! So we growed up
Side by side fer thirteen year',
And every hour of it
She growed to me more dear!—
W'y, even Father's dyin',
As he did, I do believe
Wuzn't more affectin' to me
Than it wuz to see her grieve!

Howard Chandler Christy, 1912.

And every hour of it
She growed to me more dear!

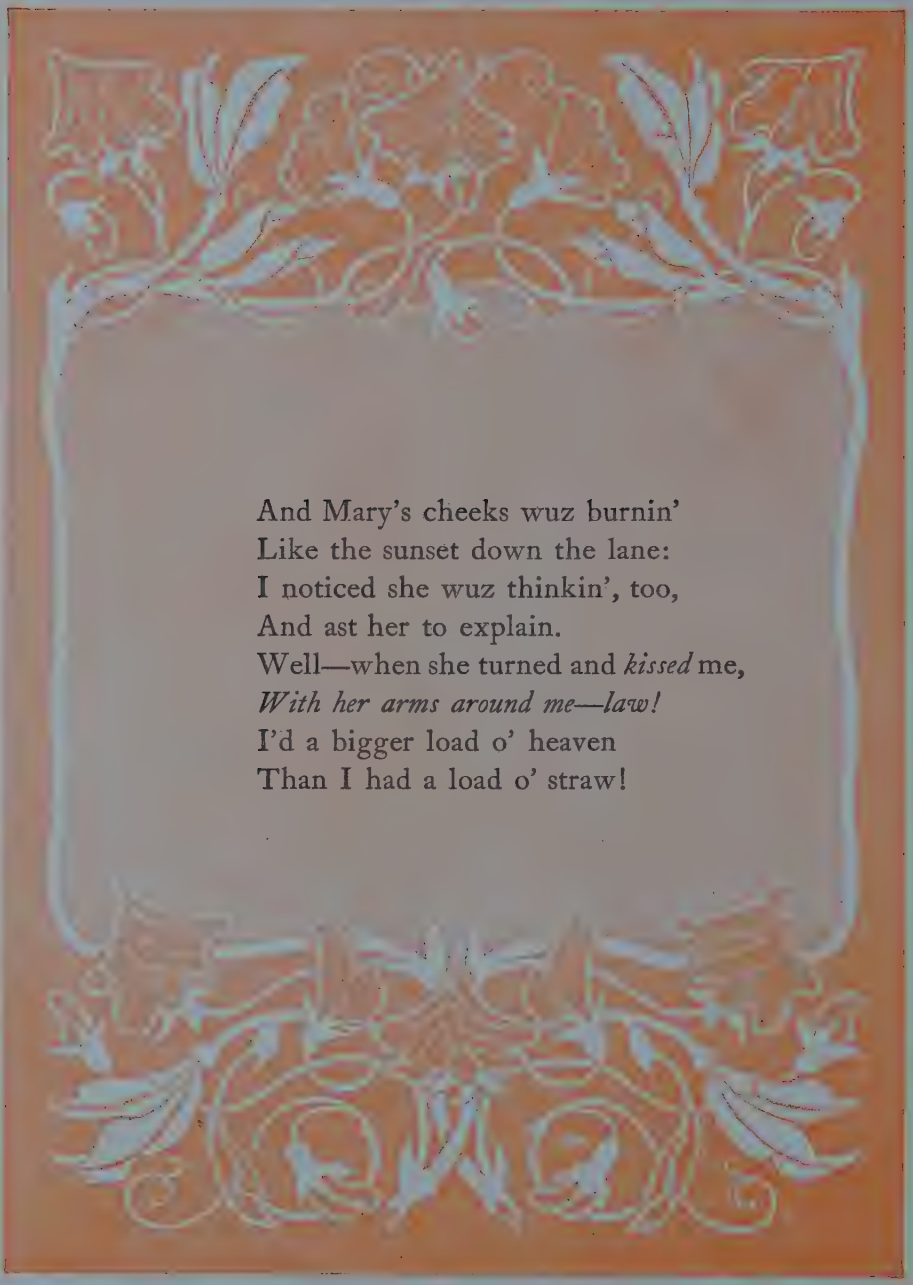
I wuz then a lad o' twenty;
And I felt a flash o' pride
In thinkin' all depended
On *me* now to pervide
Fer Mother and fer Mary;
And I went about the place
With sleeves rolled up—and workin',
With a mighty smilin' face. . . . .
Fer *sumpin' else* wuz workin'!
But not a word I said
Of a certain sort o' notion
That wuz runnin' through my head,—

Fer sumpin' else wuz workin'!

"Someday I'd maybe marry,
And *a brother's* love wuz one
Thing—*a lover's* wuz another!"
Wuz the way the notion run!

I remember onc't in harvest,
When the "cradle-in'" wuz done—
When the harvest of my summers
Mounted up to twenty-one—
I wuz ridin' home with Mary
At the closin' o' the day—
A-chawin' straws and thinkin',
In a lover's lazy way!

I remember onc't in harvest



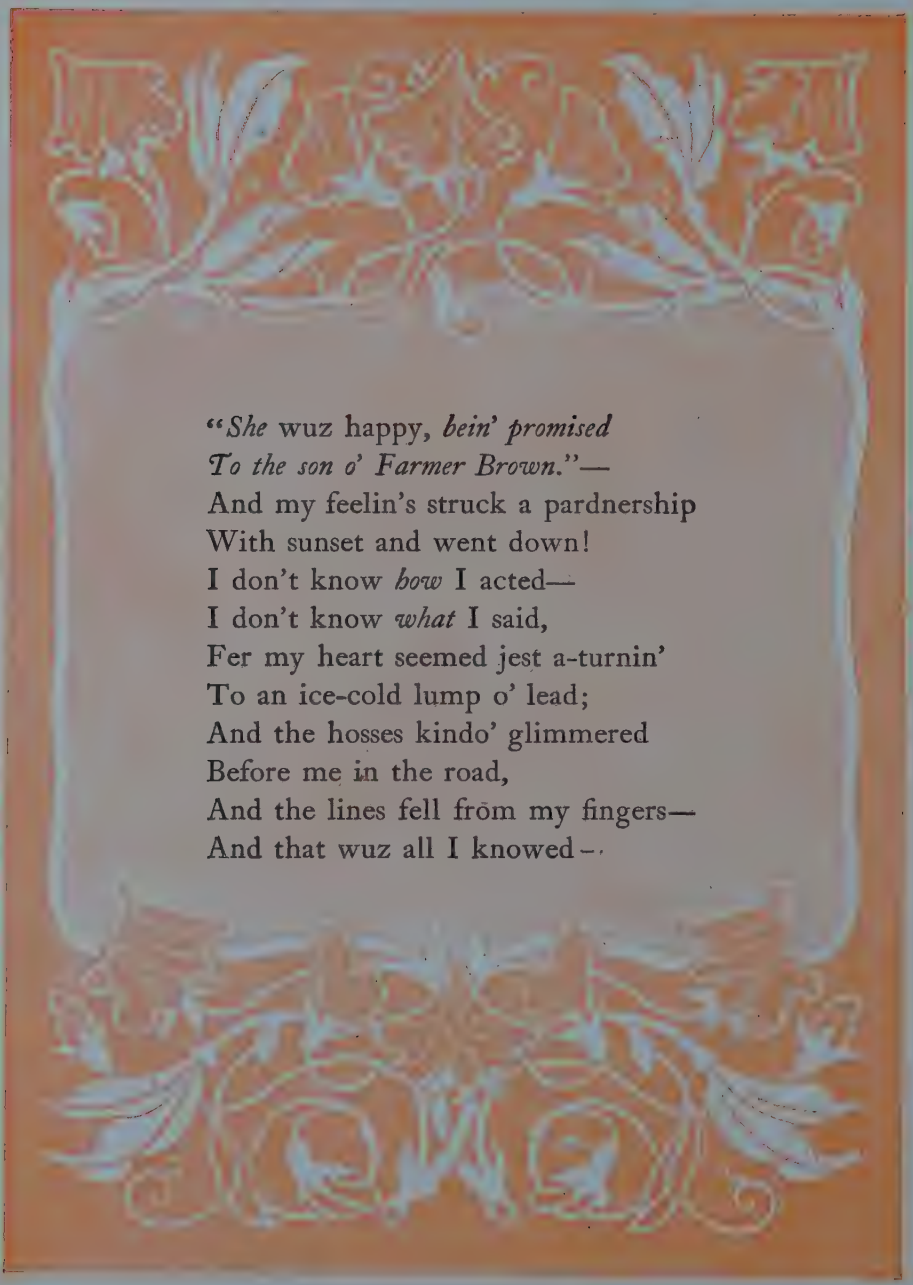
And Mary's cheeks wuz burnin'
Like the sunset down the lane:
I noticed she wuz thinkin', too,
And ast her to explain.
Well—when she turned and *kissed* me,
With her arms around me—law!
I'd a bigger load o' heaven
Than I had a load o' straw!

I noticed she wuz thinkin', too,
And ast her to explain

I don't p'tend to learnin',
But I'll tell you what's a fac',
They's a mighty truthful sayin'
Somers in a' almanack—
Er *somers*—'bout "puore happiness"—
Perhaps some folks 'll laugh
At the idy—"only lastin'
Jest two seconds and a half."—
But it's jest as true as preachin'!—
Fer that wuz *a sister's* kiss,
And a sister's lovin' confidence
A-tellin' to me this:—

Mandon d'Arrisay. 1910.

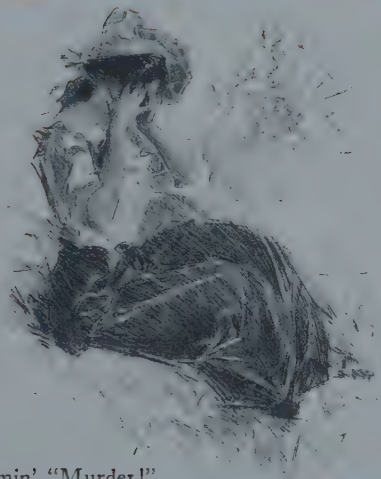
I don't p'tend to learnin'



"*She* wuz happy, *bein' promised*
To the son o' Farmer Brown."—
And my feelin's struck a pardnership
With sunset and went down!
I don't know *how* I acted—
I don't know *what* I said,
Fer my heart seemed jest a-turnin'
To an ice-cold lump o' lead;
And the hosses kindo' glimmered
Before me in the road,
And the lines fell from my fingers—
And that wuz all I knowed—

She wuz happy, bein' promised
To the son o' Farmer Brown

Fer—well, I don't know *how* long!—
They's a dim rememberence
Of a sound o' snortin' hosses,
And a stake-and-ridered fence
A-whizzin' past, and wheat-sheaves
A-dancin' in the air,
And Mary screamin' "Murder!"
And a-runnin' up to where
I wuz layin' by the roadside,
And the wagon upside down
A-leanin' on the gate-post,
With the wheels a-whirlin' roun'!



And Mary screamin' "Murder!"

And I tried to raise and meet her,
But I couldn't, with a vague
Sorto' notion comin' to me
That I had a broken leg.

Well, the women nussed me
through it;
But many a time I'd sigh
As I'd keep a-gittin' better
Instid o' goin' to die,

Well, the women nussed me through it

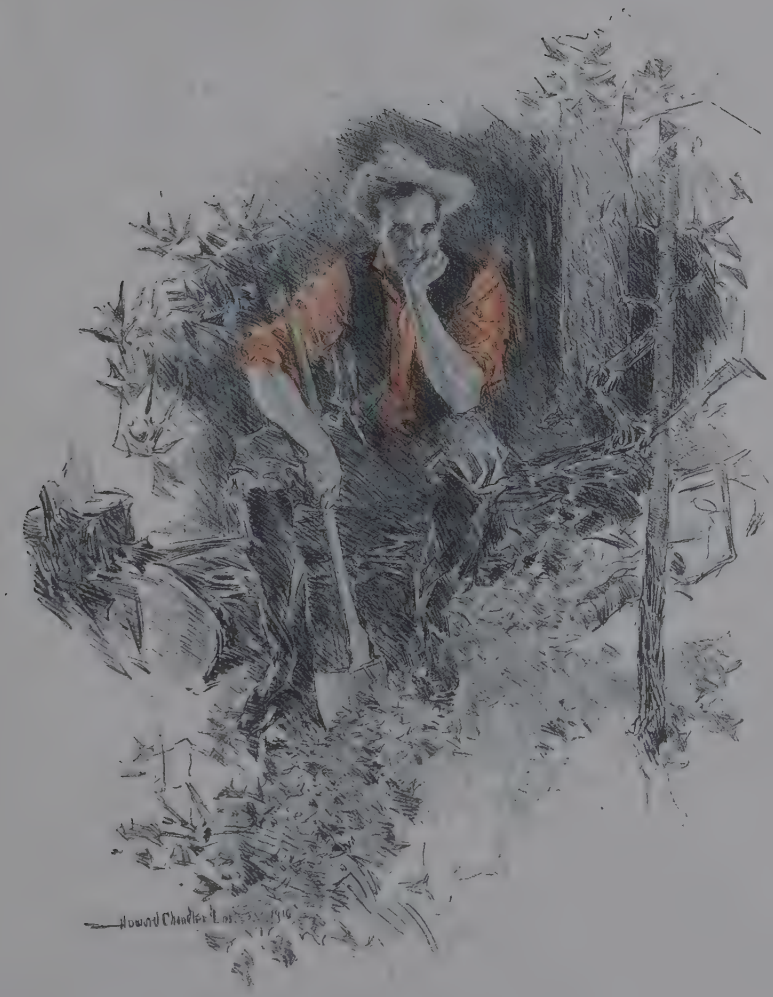
And wonder what wuz left *me*
Worth livin' fer below,
When the girl I loved wuz married
To *another*, don't you know!

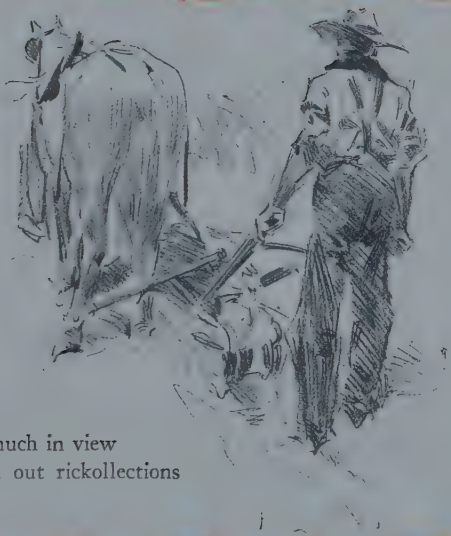
And my thoughts wuz as rebellious
As the folks wuz good and kind
When Brown and Mary married—
Railly must a-been my *mind*
Wuz kindo' out o' kilter!—
Fer I hated Brown, you see,
Worse'n *pizen*—and the feller
Whittled crutches out fer *me*—

Fer I hated Brown, you see,
Worse'n pizen—and the feller
Whittled crutches out fer me

And done a thousand little ac's
O' kindness and respec'—
And me a-wishin' all the time
That I could break his neck!
My relief wuz like a mourner's
When the funeral is done
When they moved to Illinois
In the fall o' Forty-one.

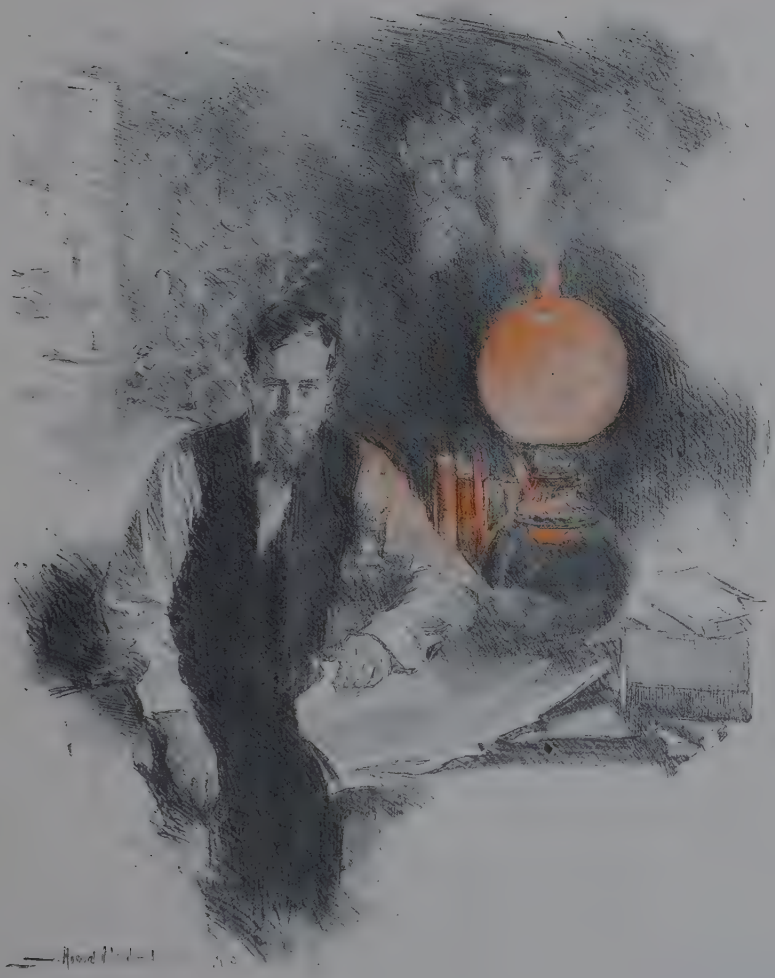
Then I went to work in airnest—
I had nothin' much in view
But to drownd out rickollections—
And it kep' me busy, too!

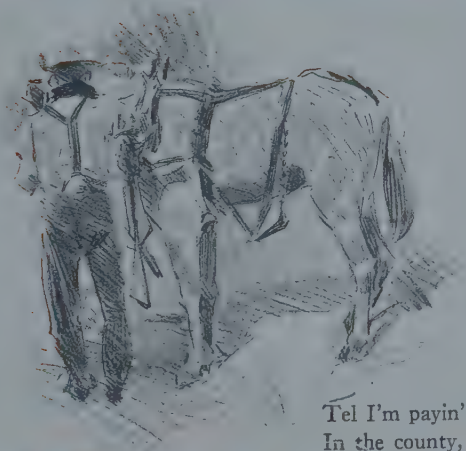

Howard Chandler



I had nothin' much in view
But to drownd out rickollections

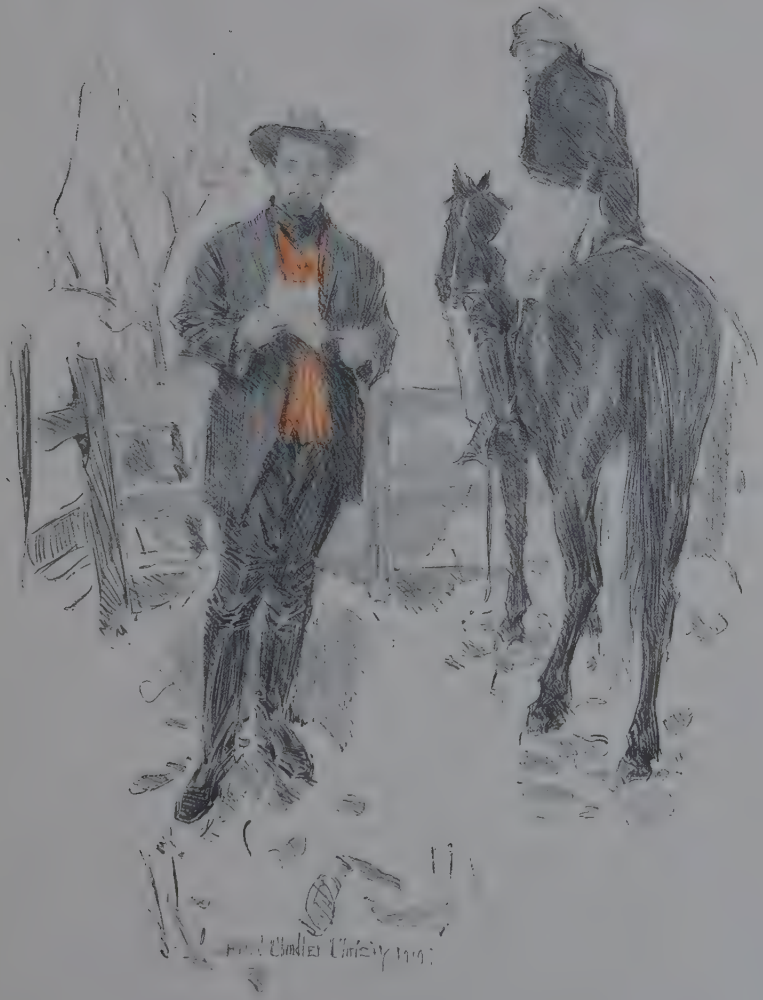
But I slowly thrived and prospered,
Tel Mother used to say
She expected yit to see me
A wealthy man some day.
Then I'd think how little *riches* wuz,
Compared to happiness—
And who'd be left to use it
When I died I couldn't guess!
But I've still kep' speculatin'
And a-gainin' year by year,
Tel I'm payin' half the taxes
In the county, mighty near!

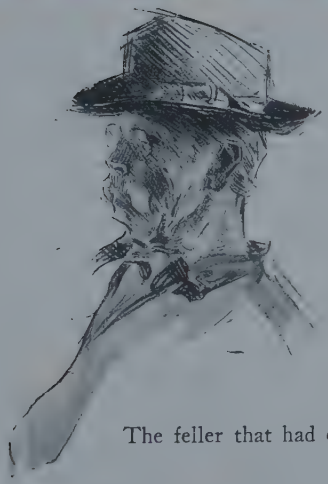




Tel I'm payin' half the taxes
In the county, mighty near

Well!—a year ago er better,
A letter comes to hand
Astin' how I'd like to dicker
Fer some Illinois land!
"The feller that had owned it,"
It went ahead to state,
"Had jest deceased, insolvent,
Leavin' chance to speculate,"—





The feller that had owned it

And then it closed by sayin'
That I'd "better come and see."—
I'd never been West, anyhow—
A'most too wild fer *me*,
I'd allus had a notion;
But a lawyer here in town
Said I'd find myself mistakened
When I come to look aroun'.
So I bids good-bye to Mother,
And I jumps aboard the train,
A-thinkin' what I'd bring her
When I come back home again—

I'd never been West, anyhow—
A'most too wild fer me

And ef she'd had an idy
What the present wuz to be,
I think it's more'n likely
She'd a-went along with me!

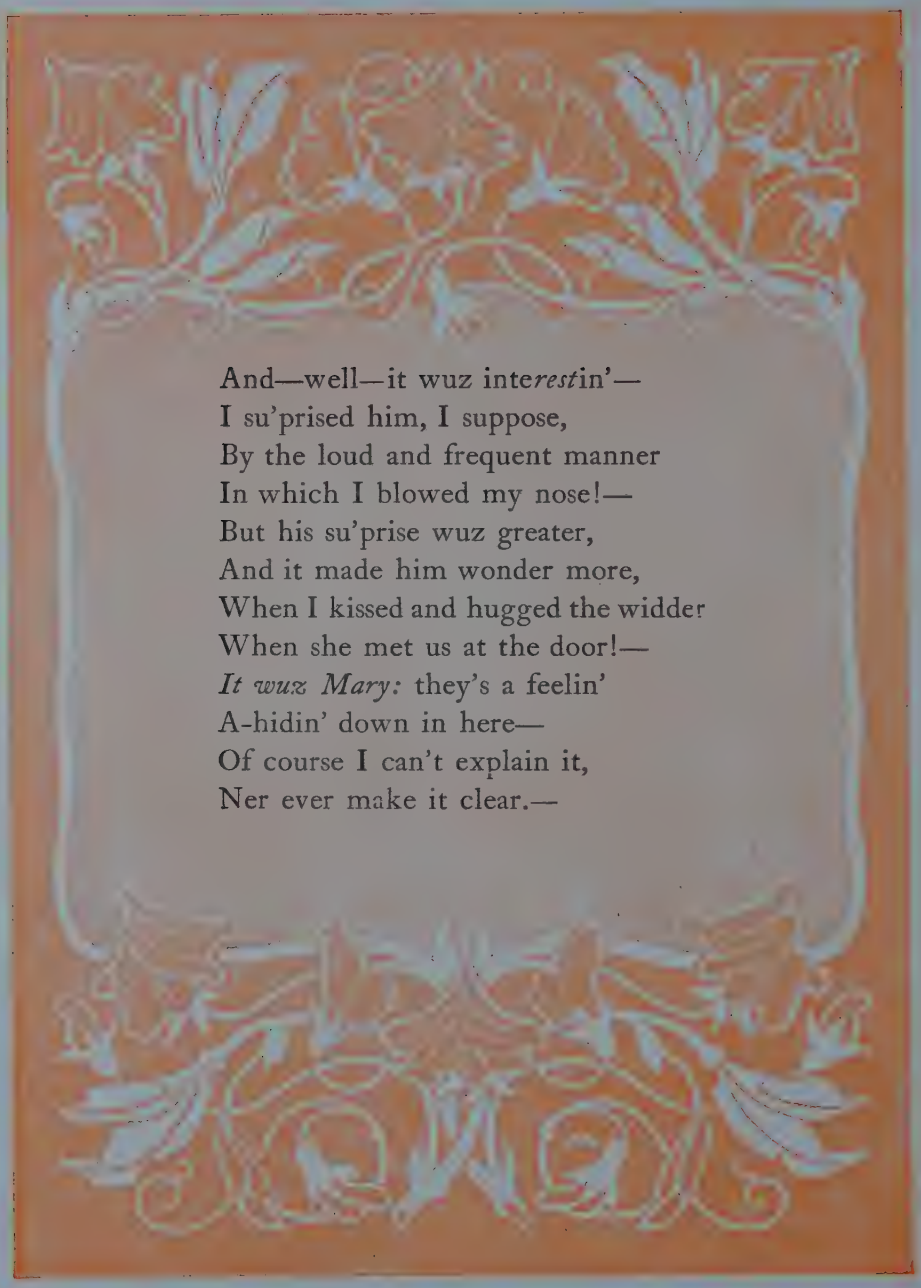
Cars is awful tejus ridin',
Fer all they go so fast!
But finally they called out
My stoppin'-place at last:
And that night, at the tavern,
I dreamp' *I* wuz a train
O' cars, and *skeered* at sompin',
Runnin' down a country lane!

Howard Chandler Christy 1910

Cars is awful tejus ridin',
Fer all they go so fast!

Well, in the morning airly—
After huntin' up the man—
The lawyer who wuz wantin'
To swop the piece o' land—
We started fer the country;
And I ast the history
Of the farm—its former owner—
And so-forth, etcetery!—

Well, in the mornin' airly—
After huntin' up the man



And—well—it wuz inte*rest*in'—
I su'prised him, I suppose,
By the loud and frequent manner
In which I blowed my nose!—
But his su'prise wuz greater,
And it made him wonder more,
When I kissed and hugged the widder
When she met us at the door!—
It wuz Mary: they's a feelin'
A-hidin' down in here—
Of course I can't explain it,
Ner ever make it clear.—

It wuz Mary

It wuz with us in that meetin',
I don't want you to fergit!
And it makes me kind o' nervous
When I think about it yit!

I *bought* that farm, and *deeded* it,
Afore I left the town,
With "title clear to mansions
In the skies," to Mary Brown!
And fu'thermore, I took her
And *the childern*—fer, you see,
They'd never seed their Grandma—
And I fetched 'em home with me.

They'd never seed their Grandma—
And I fetched 'em home with me

So *now* you've got an idy
Why a man o' fifty-four,
Who's lived a cross old bachelor
Fer thirty year' and more,
Is a-lookin' glad and smilin'!—
And I've jest come in to town
To git a pair o' license
Fer to *marry* Mary Brown.

Howard Chandler Christy 1910

To git a pair o' license
Fer to marry Mary Brown